

Marsh Marigold

Caltha leptosepala



Marsh Marigold is one of the first species to flower as soon as the snow melts. Often its flowers may even poke up and bloom through the last remaining patches of snow. The large showy flower parts are not petals, which are missing in these flowers, but the sepals, which in most flowers are small and green and protect the flower while in bud. The purpose of the parts of a flower is to attract pollinators: it doesn't really matter which parts of the flower accomplish this purpose. Many people are surprised that the colorful parts of Poinsettia and Dogwood “flowers” are not petals either but rather specialized leaves or bracts.

As the name implies, Marsh Marigolds are found in the wettest subalpine and alpine habitats. The species ranges from Utah and Colorado all the way to Alaska and the Yukon.